

# URBAN RENEWAL NOTES

March-April, 1961

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## OUR HOUSING INVENTORY

Despite the important overall improvement in the country's housing quality shown in the preliminary tabulations of the 1960 Census of Housing, almost 14 million American families occupy housing that is lacking in some or all plumbing facilities, or is deteriorating or dilapidated. Notwithstanding the \$84 billion for maintenance, repair, improvement, and alterations to nonfarm residential buildings the Census Bureau estimates was spent in the decade from 1950-1959, approximately one American family in every four lives in housing that is deficient.

These facts emerge from an analysis of the Census figures recently released. Almost 47 million units, or 89% of the Nation's 53.3 million total housing inventory were in sound condition. 8.4 million were classified as deteriorating (which is a new classification for houses requiring more repair than would be provided by ordinary maintenance if they are to continue to provide adequate shelter), and 3.6 million were dilapidated. In 1960 as in 1950, a dilapidated house was one that does not provide safe and adequate shelter.

The improvement in housing quality in the period between the 1950 and 1960 Censuses was substantial. Excluding dilapidated structures, occupied dwelling units fully equipped with plumbing increased from 27.7 million to 44.2 million. As a result, such housing in 1960 represented about 83% of all occupied units as compared with 64% in 1950. A major factor in the improved housing quality was the new housing built during the decade. The greatest improvement was in owner-occupied houses, where close to 90%, compared to about 70% in 1950, were classified as non-dilapidated and containing all plumbing facilities.

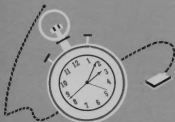
Estimated expenditures for the maintenance and repair of nonfarm residential structures for the 1950-1959 period amounted to \$61.1 billion. During the same decade, the Census Bureau estimated, \$32.9 billion in additional expenditures were made for improvements and alterations to residential buildings, making a total for the ten-year period for maintenance, repair, improvements, and alterations of \$94.0 billion.

"In the next 15 years our population will rise to 235 million, with most of the increase in and around urban areas. We must act now to assure the kind of improved human environment we need and want for the future.

"Houses are not the only things we live in. We also live in neighborhoods, and communities, and urban areas. We cannot maintain the value of our homes unless the neighborhoods in which they are located and their environment are also protected, conserved and maintained.

"We must conserve and upgrade existing residential areas—but we must do more. We must undertake positive programs for the economic and social regeneration of entire urban areas. We must establish comprehensive planning for community development that considers the common goals of metropolitan regions as a whole. Only in this way can we meet the challenge that our tremendous urban growth has imposed on us."

Robert C. Weaver, Administrator  
Housing and Home Finance Agency



## SPEEDING URBAN RENEWAL

Many urban renewal projects have been slow getting started, and the slow pace has often continued after the project gets underway. Mishawaka, Indiana (1960 population 33,361), a suburb of South Bend, has proven that slow progress need not be the fate of all urban renewal activity.

Mishawaka's first project, the LaSalle School area, received final approval in April 1960. Plans called for both clearance and conservation in a 254-acre area. A project office opened in June 1960. Six months later the following work was completed:

Conservation:	Of 438 dwelling units needing improvement, 36% were finished.
Land Acquisition:	80 parcels of 117, approximately 70%.
Demolition:	35 structures of 88, approximately 40%.
Relocation:	30 families of 80, approximately 40%.
Site Improvements:	Sewers, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters, 58%. Paving 75%.

Conservation was expedited by direct financing through a local building supply firm. 33 new homes were built on vacant land in the project area in 1960, compared to no new construction in 1959.

How was such speedy progress made? Site activities were under the supervision of the LPA Director, a former contractor and building inspector. Work was planned in advance and contracts for site improvements were let within two months after the project started. Contractors were held strictly to their schedules. Excellent cooperation was forthcoming from the building department and other city officials.

The LaSalle School project is expected to be complete by the end of 1961, a total of only 18 months. To keep the redevelopment staff going with gusto, a second project is in the planning stage, and two others are contemplated.

Full information is available from Frederick Cecchi, Director, Redevelopment Commission, Mishawaka, Indiana.

## JOINT HIGHWAY AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

In his special message to Congress on the Federal highway program, and again in his Housing Message, President Kennedy emphasized that the Federal highway program cannot be isolated from other programs for social and civic improvement, particularly our progress in urban renewal and planning.

In order to spur joint planning of highways and redevelopment in metropolitan areas, a policy-making Joint Steering Committee has been created by the Department of Commerce and the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

Regional representatives of the two agencies have also been selected and a series of regional meetings of these representatives is being arranged. The meetings will aim at highlighting the major problems in coordinating highway and urban planning in the various regions. There will also be discussions of ways and means by which State, local, and Federal agencies can work together most effectively.



#### REDEVELOPING A POTTER'S FIELD

Rio Vista, California, a city of 2,600 people located on the Sacramento River between San Francisco and Sacramento, has uncovered an interesting bit of history in connection with its urban renewal project. The project area contains an old cemetery--the town's old potter's field.

The deed for the cemetery plot is reported to be the second oldest instrument of record of Solano County. The land was deeded to Rio Vista in 1863 by an early pioneer. This was the heyday of the river traffic, carrying gold and passengers from Sacramento to San Francisco.

Within a little over a year, two steamship boiler explosions occurred at Rio Vista. It is reported that some 250 people lost their lives in these accidents. At least 50 were Chinese coolie laborers, who were buried in this potter's field. 22 of the remaining headstones bear Chinese inscriptions; no names are listed, just epitaphs. There are other headstones, but most of the markers and graves have been erased by time. No new burials have taken place in over a generation.

Until the advent of the Communist government in China made it impossible, each year local Chinese organizations would dig up one or more of the bodies, or bones, and ship them to China, so the dead men's remains might be buried in the land of their ancestors. Now, the remaining graves will be left intact, and the cemetery will become a park, serving as a memorial to the Chinese coolies who contributed so much to the development of California and the West. A group of Chinese businessmen has agreed to donate and erect an appropriate monument.

#### PROJECT COVERS 20% OF CITY'S AREA

Mount Clemens, Michigan (1960 population 21,016), is experiencing a community reawakening as the result of an urban renewal project covering 20% of the city's area and 25% of its population, a new city charter, and a widely acclaimed public housing project.

This is one of Michigan's older communities, incorporated as a village in 1827, and as a city in 1876. Since 1945, widespread deterioration had blighted the city. In order to stop this trend, the city adopted a new charter in 1954, employed a city manager, and placed on its books modern building and housing codes, with a system of strict enforcement.

An urban renewal project was planned and approved, and went into execution in June 1959. Before applying to HHFA for approval of the project, however, the city officials, facing up to the relocation problem, erected 100 units of public housing. This public housing has attracted national attention for the handsome two-story designs, on scattered sites. Another 100 units are being planned and are following the same site layout pattern.

The 463.5-acre urban renewal project involves the redevelopment of a fringe of the downtown area, with conservation as the dominant treatment in the residential areas. When the project is finished, Mount Clemens will have a new civic center, a new elementary school, large areas of conserved and reconditioned existing housing, and 200 public housing units.

Detailed information may be obtained from Max D. Peterson, Redevelopment Director, New City Hall Building, Mount Clemens, Michigan.



## URBAN RENEWAL IS MANY THINGS.....

President Kennedy's request that urban renewal activities be expedited as one of the measures to combat the economic recession brings into focus the scale and many-sided potentialities of the urban renewal program.

570 urban renewal projects in 475 communities had been approved as of December 31, 1960. Included in these are approximately 189 projects in 132 localities which include conservation and reconditioning. These projects represent \$1,866 million in capital grant earmarkings, reservations, allocations, and contract commitments. It is estimated that the expenditure for local and private construction amounts to \$5 for every dollar of Federal money that goes into urban renewal. With Federal grants of almost \$2 billion paid or reserved, the ultimate construction generated in urban renewal projects is estimated at about \$10 billion.

In addition, the undertaking of 34 demonstration projects and the preparation of 7 Community Renewal Programs have been approved, involving an additional \$5 million of capital grant funds.

As of the end of 1960, contracts amounting to \$13.4 million had been authorized to provide urban planning assistance to 1,464 small municipalities, to 112 metropolitan, regional, or other special areas, and to 10 states.

Programs for Community Improvement (Workable Programs) were active in 780 localities.

Of the 475 communities with urban renewal projects, 203 of them, or 43%, had less than 25,000 population in the 1960 Census. The population range is as follows:

Population Group (1960 Census)	Total Loca- tions	%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100.0</b>
1 million and over	5	1.1
500,000 - 999,999	14	2.9
250,000 - 499,999	25	4.8
100,000 - 249,999	56	11.8
50,000 - 99,999	83	17.5
25,000 - 49,999	91	19.2
10,000 - 24,999	107	22.5
Under 10,000	96	20.2



## URBAN RENEWAL IS PROJECTS.....

**Clearance and Redevelopment Projects.** 531 projects had progressed to the point that complete information was available as of December 31, 1960, for areas so badly deteriorated that only clearance and redevelopment were feasible. These projects comprised 26,915 acres. Prior to redevelopment, 438 of these projects were blighted residential areas, 49 were blighted nonresidential areas, 18 were disaster areas, 14 were open or predominantly open land areas, and 4 were university or college areas.

Originally, about 270,500 dwelling units were in the clearance areas in these projects.

Of the total redevelopment acreage in the projects, 7,291 acres are planned for streets, alleys, and other public rights-of-way, leaving a net of 19,624. 10,098 acres are planned for residential and related public reuse. 1,864 acres are planned for nonresidential public and semi-public reuse. 3,024 acres are planned for commercial, and 4,638 for industrial, reuse.

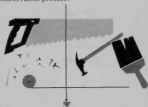
52 projects are planned for exclusively residential reuse, 310 are planned for mixed residential and nonresidential reuse, and 159 for exclusively nonresidential reuse.

The smallest approved project was the 0.4-acre Gates House project in York, Pennsylvania, and the largest is the Eastwick project in Philadelphia, containing 2,506 acres. The size breakdown for those projects for which this information is available is as follows:

Acreage of Projects	Total Number of Projects	%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Under 10 acres	115	22.1
10 to 24 acres	136	26.5
25 to 49 acres	112	21.5
50 to 99 acres	95	18.2
100 acres and over	61	11.7

**Conservation and Reconditioning Projects.** All told, 179 projects in 135 different localities feature conservation and reconditioning (160 projects assisted or to be assisted with Federal loans and grants, 1 demonstration project, and 9 projects assisted by HHFA technical guidance plus FHA Section 220 urban renewal mortgage insurance). Of these projects, 11 are exclusively conservation, 80 are predominantly conservation, and 88 have conservation treatment in combination with clearance and redevelopment.

It is the conservation aspect of urban renewal that has been receiving increased URA emphasis in recent months--the conservation, protection, and upgrading of neighborhoods which are basically sound, but just beginning to show evidences of deterioration. Including units in clearance sections, there were 235,600 dwelling units in these areas; of this number, 125,500 are to be retained. Of these, 95,900 will require improvements to meet project conservation standards, while 28,600 already meet these standards, with the condition of the remainder undetermined. In addition to the upgrading of the structures in these areas, public improvements where needed are also a basic part of the conservation process.



## BUT URBAN RENEWAL IS MORE THAN PROJECTS.....

The foregoing statistics of activity in urban renewal projects show some of the concrete accomplishments of the program--the benefits to small and large communities where equalized slums and unsightly blight are being replaced by new and improved housing, and by schools, playgrounds, parks, medical centers, and other community facilities. But there have also been other results, less easily converted to statistical measurement, that need to be considered.

The Housing Act of 1949 authorized the Federal Government for the first time to make loans and grants for the clearance and redevelopment of slum areas. Since that time, the legislation has been amended several times, broadening and expanding the Federal assistance available to communities. What began as a slum clearance program has evolved into a flexible and versatile kit of tools, known as urban renewal, that not only provides for the arresting and removal of slum conditions, but can directly and indirectly benefit communities in other ways.

There is already evidence that urban renewal activities have increased tax revenues in many cities, as rundown areas are replaced by new uses, with higher tax assessments. In these same areas the cost of providing municipal services has gone down. Improved industrial and commercial employment has resulted.

Communities are now undertaking activities never before considered feasible. More and better planning, code enforcement, realignment and strengthening of administrative organizations within municipal governments, are some examples.



#### URBAN RENEWAL IS PLANNING, STUDYING, AND ANALYZING.....

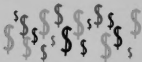
Program for Community Improvement. Communities that have had Programs for Community Improvement certified were required to agree to (1) adopt and enforce modern codes and ordinances, (2) carry out a comprehensive planning program, (3) analyze neighborhood needs, (4) have an adequate administrative organization to carry out its activities, (5) provide the necessary local financing, (6) assure relocation housing for families displaced by any governmental action, and (7) enlist the participation of the citizens of the community.

Since a PFCI has been a prerequisite to making Federal aid available to a community in the form of urban renewal loans and grants, FHA special mortgage insurance under Sections 220 and 221 of the National Housing Act, and public housing, a significant start has been made toward achieving better and more vigorous action for local self-improvement.

While there is no simple yardstick to measure the tangible results of the PFCI in participating communities, the reports they submit annually document real and significant accomplishments, which appear to be bringing new vitality to many cities and towns.

Community Renewal Programs. Under a 1959 amendment to the Housing Act, localities can receive Federal assistance to develop Community Renewal Programs, so they may approach their problems of blight on a citywide, rather than piecemeal, basis. All the deteriorated and deteriorating areas of the city can be identified and classified as to the relative urgency and degree of urban renewal action needed. The locality's resources for taking urban renewal action—for financing, relocating displaced families, utilizing cleared land, and meeting other program requirements—can be established. Then the community can lay out a long-range action program for urban renewal including the provision of related public improvements, with its total needs balanced against total resources. It can establish and maintain feasible priorities and schedules for the various types of activities required to carry out its program.

Federal grants can cover two-thirds of the cost of preparing a Community Renewal Program.



#### URBAN RENEWAL IS FINANCING AIDS.....

FHA Special Mortgage Insurance. Two special, liberal FHA mortgage insurance plans have been created for assisting urban renewal activities.

Section 220 is available within urban renewal project areas. It can be used for financing the conservation and reconditioning of existing single-family and multifamily dwellings or the construction of new housing in such areas. 188 such areas in 110 cities had been certified as eligible for Section 220 mortgage insurance as of December 31, 1960. \$280,883,519 of insured mortgages had been placed on 20,956 completed and occupied dwelling units in 96 projects. However, virtually all of the activity has been for new construction.

Section 221 mortgage insurance provides more liberal financing for relocation housing anywhere within a community in which urban renewal or other governmental action has, or will cause, the displacement of families from their homes. It may be used for financing the construction of new housing, or the purchase, repair, or reconditioning of existing housing, either single or multifamily. As of December 31, 1960, certifications had been made for 103,677 housing units in 340 cities. 22,240 new units were under construction, and commitments had been made and mortgages insured on 4,292 existing homes.



#### AND IT IS ALSO MUCH MORE.....

This, then, is urban renewal--the name given the effort to revitalize our city areas which are decaying, and to prevent good areas from starting to decay.

- It is a program under which cities, with local public support, and in partnership with, and maximum reliance on, private enterprise, undertake urban renewal with Federal Government assistance.
- It is a system for preventing the premature obsolescence of urban neighborhoods and facilities.
- It is a tool for the restoration of declining areas which can and should serve a longer period of useful life.

- It is a device for the re-creation of areas which are worn out, without leaving them and the people in them to stagnate until some accident of history in the unforeseeable future stimulates new growth.
- It is a technique through which the citizen exercises a control over, and makes use of, the persistent vitality of the urban environment in order better to meet the needs of the people who live and work in it.
- Above all it deals with humans--trying to provide a satisfactory living and working environment for all Americans.

#### DEMONSTRATION PROJECT REPORT PUBLISHED

A report has been issued on a completed demonstration project by the New York Temporary State Housing Rent Commission, covering a study of the problems and prospects for conserving housing in a 50-year-old neighborhood of New York City. The study was designed to develop methods for measuring the conservation potential of multi-family housing in a city's older neighborhoods.

The report, entitled PROSPECTS FOR REHABILITATION (Conservation), is based on a study of a 35-square-block area of Morningside Heights, Manhattan, covering 305 residential buildings, housing some 32,000 persons.

The report covers levels of conservation possible for various types of structures in the area; economic factors in determining the feasibility of conservation; and problems of mortgage financing for buildings after conservation. It recommends the kind of conservation appropriate for each of the building types in Morningside and analyzes the amount of cash investment necessary to do the work and the rentals required to recoup the investment.

Copies of the report are available from the Commission at 280 Broadway, New York 7, New York.



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